



Ocular Migraine-Flashes-Floater-Vitreous Detachment

The Following Information has been Prepared for You:

Ocular Migraines - these are episodes of vision disturbance that usually last from 20 to 25 minutes. They are sometimes referred to as "visual auras." They commonly precede a migraine headache, but may also occur without a headache. Approximately 75% of individuals with a history of migraine headaches will experience an ocular migraine.

Family history, traumatic brain injury, concussion, smoking, alcohol, history of illegal drug use, other medications and medical conditions that cause poor circulation are all risk factors for migraine development. Additionally, there are other triggers that are commonly associated with migraines: stress (33%), consumption of chocolate (20%), consumption of orange juice, wine, rich foods including pork, fried foods, cheese, cream and peanuts, bright lights, glare, flashing lights, blue light from electronic devices, sinus congestion, illness, hormones and poor sleep or sleep apnea.

Various presentations of ocular migraines have been reported:

- zig-zag lines on one side of the vision which enlarge and move toward the center before fading out in the periphery
- "watery" vision, described as water running down a pane of glass or heat waves coming off hot asphalt
- tunnel vision, loss of side vision, or blackouts
- kaleidoscope effect (colored dots, flashes or sparkles)
- crescent-shaped dark spot
- blurry vision
- vision that appears magnified or minimized, with objects appearing smaller, larger, or further away
- light & glare sensitivity (very common complaint)

Ocular migraines are self-limiting and generally do not require immediate medical treatment. Preventative measures include wearing correct prescription eyewear with anti-glare lenses, polarized sunglasses to block glare & protecting the eyes from harmful blue light emitted by electronic devices. Other measures include monitoring diet and sleep patterns, improving circulation with regular exercise, smoking cessation, using deep breathing and relaxation techniques, chiropractic adjustments of the spine, allergy and sinus management, migraine medications & avoidance of alcohol, drug or food triggers. Some prescription medications can cause or exacerbate migraines, so review these with your doctor.

If you experience an ocular migraine, it is recommended to lie down in a dark, quiet room, and take slow, deep breaths. Take over-the-counter or prescription migraine medication as directed. If your symptoms do not improve within an hour, or if additional symptoms develop, contact your doctor.

Flashes - the perception of shimmering or flickering lights, usually in the peripheral vision. Flashes can occur during an ocular migraine. Some patients report seeing colored lights, watery or wavy vision, constricted visual fields, or a pulsing dark spot that moves across the field of vision. These events are usually short in duration, between ten and twenty minutes, and resolve spontaneously.

However, flashes can sometimes indicate a serious problem with your retina - such as a retinal tear or detachment, which is very sight-threatening. If you experience new flashes or sudden changes in your perceived flashes, seek immediate medical attention from your eye doctor!

Floater - these are wispy, shadowy vision symptoms that arise from small particles that float within the vitreous, a transparent jelly-like fluid that fills the inner part of the eye. They are typically best seen against a bright background, like a white wall or a blue sky, because such lighting causes the most distinct shadows of the floaters to be cast upon the retina, the light sensitive membrane that covers the inside wall of the eye.

Floater can be congenital, caused by remnants of blood vessels that helped to form the eye during development.

More often, they are caused by age-related liquification of the vitreous, that causes wispy debris to be suspended in the gel. Patients often describe floaters as a wispy cobweb shape, dust particle, dense clump, or widespread film. They may take on many different shapes. The age-related floaters are usually noticed by patients over 40 or after cataract surgery.

Floaters can also occur due to a serious ocular health problem, such as retinal detachments or bleeding inside the cavity of the eye. Ocular, head or bodily blunt force trauma, diabetes, uncontrolled blood pressure, uncontrolled blood cholesterol and some medications can put you at higher risk of dangerous floaters. If you experience sudden onset floaters or a sudden change in the color, quantity or size of your floaters, seek immediate medical attention from your eye doctor!

Vitreous Detachment - this typically occurs due to age-related liquification of the vitreous. The vitreous eventually separates from the back of the eye, usually in the 50's - 60's. When it is in the separation process, it can cause the perception of flashes. Once it fully separates, it can cause the perception of a new round, ring-shaped or "c-shaped" floater near the center of your vision. While this floater can be bothersome, it is not harmful in itself. With time, it will typically become less noticeable. Laser treatments are available for those floaters that are persistent and bothersome. Speak to your eye doctor if you are interested in Laser Ablation.

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Provider Contact Information

Family Eye Care & Pediatric Vision Center, PLLC

Melissa Holliman, OD

David Holliman, OD

Brandon Holliman, OD

1203 N. Eastman Rd

Kingsport, TN 37664

Phone: (423) 274-3321

Fax: (423) 247-3631

FamilyEyecareKingsport@gmail.com

[Website: DrHolliman.com](http://DrHolliman.com)